

## TEEN PREGNANCY

**HON. LEE H. HAMILTON**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 25, 1995*

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington report for Wednesday, January 18, 1995, into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

## TEEN PREGNANCY

There is no doubt that all of us should be concerned about the number of teenagers having babies. These young people must overcome formidable obstacles in order to become independent adults capable of supporting themselves and their families. All too often they fail, with dire consequences not only for parents and children but for society.

## TRENDS

The U.S. has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates of any western industrialized nation. Before the end of their teenage years, 43% of girls become pregnant.

While the birth rate for adolescents has generally declined in the last 30 years, births to unmarried adolescents have steadily risen. In 1992, over half a million teens gave birth, and 71% of them were unmarried. In 1991, 10% of all births in Indiana were to single teens, compared to nine percent of all births nationally.

While the number of unmarried teens giving birth has increased, the likelihood that they will place their children for adoption has decreased. Furthermore, in most cases, the fathers of children born to teen mothers are adults.

## CONSEQUENCES

The escalating rate of out-of-wedlock teen pregnancies has disturbing consequences. First, teen mothers are more likely to be economically disadvantaged before childbirth, and usually remain poor after bearing a child. Two-thirds of never-married mothers now raise their children in poverty. Many teens who become pregnant do not finish high school, and lack the skills necessary to find secure employment. Unmarried teens are also less likely to receive financial support from the father.

Second, the human costs of teen pregnancy are substantial. Teen mothers are likely to have another child, usually within two years. These parents are even less likely to finish high school or to marry. In addition, their children tend to fare worse than those from two-parent families on measures of health, education, and emotional and behavioral adjustment.

The strain of too-early childbearing on adolescent mothers is significant. They are more likely to describe their children as "difficult," and are less likely than older mothers to provide adequate intellectual stimulation and emotional support. And teen mothers also receive good prenatal care less frequently than their older counterparts. Consequently, they have a higher rate of premature birth and low-birthweight babies. Lastly, children of teen parents are much more likely to become teen parents themselves—creating a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break.

Not surprisingly, the costs to the public of teenage childbearing are substantial. Three-quarters of single teenage mothers begin receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) within five years of the birth of their first child. Nearly half of long-term welfare recipients are women who gave birth before age 17. One study has concluded that over half of the total costs of AFDC, Medic-

aid, and food stamps is attributable to households begun by teen births, totaling \$34 billion in 1992.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

There is no question that teenage parents bear daunting responsibilities, and many of them try very hard to be good parents. But there is also no question that we must do more to lessen the toll of teenage childbearing.

First, we must bring down the rate of teenage pregnancy. We need to make teens better understand that their actions have very serious consequences for which they are ultimately responsible. Many people say that it is futile to try to persuade teens to abstain from sex. But in my view, we have no other choice. Teens receive a lot of pressure to engage in sex, and we need to create some pressure in the other direction. National leaders, the entertainment industry, and sports figures should all be part of such an effort, as should churches, schools, and most of all, parents. Teens need to know about the risks of premature sexual activity—not just pregnancy, but also AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. This message must be coupled with efforts to provide teens with the information, confidence and skills they need to make good decisions. Parents must teach their children about responsible decision-making and sex. The message should be clear: becoming a parent as a teen is a bad deal for their children.

More difficult, but equally important, is to give disadvantaged teens some hope for a better future. Those who feel that their future goals would be jeopardized by becoming a parent too early have real incentives to delay parenting. Those who feel that they have no future do not. A number of private programs aimed at encouraging young people to stay in school and pursue postsecondary education have shown promise.

Second, we should develop ways to support families of teenage parents without creating incentives for out-of-wedlock births. The challenge is to help the children of teen parents without making out-of-wedlock childbearing an attractive alternative. Fathers must be held responsible for the support of their children. We must strengthen efforts to establish paternity at birth and collect child support.

Some have suggested cutting off government assistance to teen parents. But what happens to the children? I believe we should require teen parents to live at home and stay in school in order to receive government assistance. Some teen parents, of course, come from abusive or unstable households and will not be able to live at home. For these children, we should establish community-based facilities to house and support young families while the mother completes school or job training.

Raising children is not easy, even for mature adults. It is extraordinarily difficult for young people who are still growing up themselves. I believe that we must emphasize to teenagers that youthfulness does not absolve them from responsibility for their actions. At the same time, we have an obligation to help young parents who are struggling to raise their children.

## TRIBUTE TO HOWARD STERN

**HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 25, 1995*

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, on December 7 of last year a truly remarkable event took

place in New York City. A young man from the Bronx climbed over the guard rail of the George Washington Bridge with the intention of jumping to his death. He had brought with him a cellular telephone to place one last, desperate telephone call.

Mr. Speaker, that telephone call—to New York radio personality Howard Stern—saved the young man's life. In one of his most important performances, Howard Stern talked to the young man and kept him smiling and engaged until help could arrive.

Mr. Speaker, such is the popularity of Mr. Stern's radio program, that it was Stern's audience which came to the rescue. A listener named Helen Trimble, who heard the event unfold on her radio while driving on the bridge, pulled her car over at the sight of Prince and enveloped him in a bear hug. Port Authority police Lt. Stanley Bleeker, hearing the exchange between Howard Stern and the jumper on his radio, immediately sent officers to the scene. The young man was soon brought to safety.

Mr. Speaker, it is rare that an individual has this great an impact upon another's life. On this occasion, Howard Stern came face to face with a situation for which no one can prepare. Mr. Stern's humanity showed through at this crucial moment, and as a result a human life was saved.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to join me in congratulations and thanks to Mr. Howard Stern for his wonderful humanitarian achievement.

## PREMIER LIEN CHAN

**HON. DONALD M. PAYNE**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 25, 1995*

Mr. PAYNE of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, the attached paper entitled "Premier Lien Chan: His Views and Ideals" was sent to me by Winston L. Yang of Seton Hall University, my alma mater.

I feel it is a most impressive paper and would like to share it with my colleagues.

PREMIER LIEN CHAN: HIS VIEWS AND IDEALS

(By Winston L. Yang)

Lien Chan has served as Premier of the Republic of China (ROC) for almost two years. During the past two years he has made significant contributions to Taiwan's modernization, democratization, and reform.

As a determined, formidable leader, Lien Chan meets challenges well. Noteworthy academic accomplishments, broad administrative experience and a pragmatic approach to governance are the foundation of his open-mindedness and tolerance, which are so sorely needed in a democratic and pluralistic society. These traits are vital to the fulfillment of constitutional democracy in the Republic of China. Lien defines his Cabinet as a "multifaceted government," and holds the view that all administrative organs must maintain political neutrality and act in accordance with the law, so that a fair environment for competition among political parties can be ensured and a model of political pluralism upheld within a constitutional framework.

As a champion of free-market economics, Lien believes that the market should be the primary force in determining the direction of economic growth. But he also believes the